Reports for 2007 and 2008 have rated India as the second most attractive destination. Government has announced a slew of measures to accelerate the demand in the economy which would enable India to continue as an attractive investment destination. Government is also undertaking a number of initiatives for promotion and facilitation of investments.

Success of NREGA

*138. SHRI RAJNITI PRASAD: Will the Minister of RURAL DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, (NREGA) the ambitious scheme of Government to provide income to the rural poor has not been as successful as intended;

(b) whether it is also a fact that the job cards prepared for the beneficiaries are kept by the Gram Pradhans and the money that is meant to be given to them is actually not given; and

(c) if so, the steps Government would take to minimise the leakage in the scheme?

THE MINISTER OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT (SHRI RAGHUVANSH PRASAD SINGH): (a) No, Sir. NREGA has been successful in fulfillment of its objectives of augmentation of employment opportunities and creation of durable assets. So far in the current year, nearly 4 crore households have got employment under NREGA. Persondays generation under NREGA has been almost two times of the persondays generation in the earlier wage employment programmes. A significant share in the employment generated belongs to SCs (30%), STs (25%) and women (48%). 22 lakh works have been taken up in the current financial year of which 46% relate to water conservation, 18% to rural connectivity and 15% to land development. Individual land owned by 4.36 lakh households belonging to SC/ST, BPL and IAY have been benefited from NREGA works such as irrigation facility, land development and plantation.

(b) No, Sir. Para 2 of Schedule-II of NREG Act provides that all job cards shall be in the custody of the job card holders to whom they belong. Ministry of Rural Development has also issued instructions from time to time in this regard. However, seven instances have been brought to the notice of the Ministry regarding job cards being kept in the custody of Gram Pradhans which have been sent to the State Governments for suitable action.

(c) In order to minimise leakages in the implementation of NREGA, the Ministry has taken the following steps:—

(I) Generating Awareness

It is the constant endeavor of the Government to generate greater awareness among rural households about their legal rights under NREGA through intensive IEC activities. The efforts made in this regard involve print as well as electronic media such as brochures, people's primers, hand books, TV spots, radio jingles, advertisements, films etc. Gram Sabhas have been convened. Village camps have been organized by the District teams and Self Help Groups associated with awareness generation campaign. Government of India has also introduced awards known as Rozgar

Jagrookta Puraskar to recognize the outstanding contributions by the Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) for promoting effective implementation of NREGA in different States of the Country. In the NREGA Sammelan held on 2.2.2009, five such NGOs have been awarded Rozgar Jagrookta Puraskar for their outstanding contributions in the field of awareness generation.

(II) Transparency and strict Vigilance and Monitoring

(i) Payment of wages to the NREGA workers has been made statutory through their accounts in Banks/post offices. So far 6.15 crore accounts of NREGA workers in Banks/Post Offices have been opened.

(ii) Mandatory social audit of works has been provided under the Act. So far, Social Audit has been conducted in 2.20 lakh Gram Panchayats.

(iii) Ministry has prescribed regular verification of the works being executed under NREGA. So far 2.99 lakh works have been verified by district level officials and 17.38 lakh works have been verified by block level officials.

(III) MIS

A comprehensive web based MIS has been implemented which places all data relating to financial and programme performance indicators in public domain. 1.2 crore muster rolls and 6.1 crore job cards are available on the website.

(IV) Capacity building and Peoples' participation

(i) NREGA has empowered the Panchayati Raj Institutions by way of capacity building of the functionaries, providing additional manpower, ICT support and by implementation of the programme through PRIs. 1.96 lakh Gram Rozgar Sahayaks have been appointed at the Gram Panchayat level and a pool of technical staff is deployed at the Block and district level including 23,501 technical staff; 7070 Data Entry Operators; and 5574 Accountants.

(ii) For ensuring people participation, Village level Monitoring Committees have been set up and about 7.41 lakh members of these Committees have been trained.

(V) Accountability

(i) State Governments are to set up a High level Coordination Committee under the Chief Secretary of the State to ensure inter-departmental coordination in the implementation of the Act. The Committee shall regularly review the implementation of Schemes and ensure that 2%, 10% and 100% of the inspection of the works and records of the Scheme at the State/District/Block respectively is conducted once a quarter and all deficiencies are removed and all grievances are redressed.

(ii) District Programme Coordinator are to ensure that within 15 days of funds received by them, the same is released to eligible Gram Panchayat in the District.

(iii) District Collectors have been made responsible for the proper organization of the Gram Sabha wherever required under the Act.

(iv) The Gram Sabha and Ward Sabha are to identify and select the projects to be taken up in the Gram Panchayat. Gram Sabha will be held regularly to ensure social audit. All information relating to flow of funds, works, workers, muster rolls, measurement books, sanction orders, cash book and all other records and registers shall be placed in the Gram Sabha. There shall be video documentation of the proceedings of all Gram Sabhas.

Viability of SEZs in present economic scenario

*139. SHRI D. RAJA: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government has done any study or assessed the impact of the recent global economic slowdown on the use and future of the numerous Special Economic Zones (SEZs) sanctioned in the country in the last two years;

(b) whether it is a fact that the international economic slowdown will have an impact on Indian exports;

(c) if so, whether Government will do a re-think on the utility of the SEZs in the near future;

(d) whether it is also a fact that the targets of new units have fallen behind in the SEZs; and

(e) the steps proposed by Government to review the viability of SEZs in the present economic scenario?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI KAMAL NATH): (a) No, Sir.

(b) Yes, Sir.

(c) No, Sir. SEZs have made significant contribution to the exports from the country. Exports for 2007-08 from SEZs were around Rs. 66,638 crores and during April, 2008 to December, 2008 exports have been around Rs. 66,160 crores. It is expected that SEZs would generate exports of around Rs. 90,000 crores for the year 2008-09. SEZs have also brought in investments of around Rs. 1,01,906 crores so far. Therefore, there is no need to rethink on the utility of the SEZs in the near future.

(d) No specific targets have been set by Government for the SEZ units as these are in either private sector or joint sector.

(e) Does not arise in view of the above.

Habitations under PMGSY

†*140. SHRI PYARELAL KHANDELWAL: Will the Minister of RURAL DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

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†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.